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House committee approves SAVE the Children

LANSING — The Michigan House Committee on Education today unanimously approved a landmark legislative package to help prevent early learning failure and give students the skills they need to succeed both in school and in life, said Sen. Nancy Cassis, the key sponsor and coordinator of the SAVE the Children package.

The key bill in the proposal, SB 329, sponsored by Cassis, establishes an Early Intervening Grant Program. The program will develop four model sites and up to 15 sites of improvement. Schools with a student population that exceeds the state average for learning-disabled students, speech- and language-impaired students and emotionally impaired students are eligible for the grants. School districts with a percentage of pupils reading below grade level are also eligible.

“This package targets our youngest students in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades who begin to struggle academically,” said Cassis, R-Novi. “It is modeled after a Northville School program and the intent is to prevent academic problems from leading to failure by recommending appropriate interventions.

“A child’s self-esteem and confidence building as well as cost saving effectiveness are worthy goals. Failure leads to failure. Success breeds success. Last year this program saved Northville Public Schools \$7.3 million that could be redirected back into the classroom where it is needed most.”

With these significant savings, this package is a win-win for all concerned, Cassis said.

“At a time when we are raising the bar on high school graduation requirements and concerns have been raised about potential drop outs and the financial cost to society, this program can get children on the right track to avoid later need for special education, higher drop out rates, and risky adolescent behavior,” said Cassis. “A well educated workforce starts with a strong academic beginning.

“The Legislature has taken an important step to ensure that our youngest students get the best start for learning. Early identification of learning problems and subsequent intervention are critical for the future of our schoolchildren and our state.

“I thank my colleagues in the House Education Committee for passing this vital legislation,” added Cassis. “I urge the entire House membership to vote yes and send the package to the governor.”

The bills now move to the full House for consideration.
